



## Squad selection at Raiders

### 1 Overview

A major challenge for each age group is to organise players into team squads. It's important that both managers and parents are aware of the Raiders guidelines. When joining the Club, players and parents "buy in" to this approach.

As a Club we follow some clearly defined principles on the structure of teams and the development of players. These principles are driven by our Charter and Community Club status, and are an integral part of the Football Development Plan that we submit to the Herts FA each year. Our success in following these principles and guidelines is a key factor in how we are viewed by the Herts FA and, in particular, by the Football Foundation and Sport England in our application for grants (e.g. our success in attracting grants of £350,000 for BerkoAstro and the Paul Beard Centre).

The basic principles are:

- Squads are graded on an ability basis. We attempt to match players with other players of similar ability.
- Player movement up or down can take place at the beginning of the season and if necessary, at the Christmas break, to balance the squads or to move a player into a squad which better matches his or her ability and development.
- The Club gives priority to children living in the Berkhamsted and Northchurch community and those attending local schools, irrespective of ability.

### 2 Squad size

The recommended size of squads is as follows:

- Each mini-sided team must not have a squad greater than double the size of its team (so 5v5 – max squad size 10, 7v7 – max squad size 14 etc)
- For U11 and U12, the minimum squad size is 12 and a maximum of 15.
- For U13 and U14, the minimum squad size is 14 and the maximum of 17.
- From U15 upwards, the recommended maximum squad size increases to 20.
- Once the recommended maximum squad size has been reached, no further players will be added.
- Additional players may be added with the agreement of the Club Committee or the Age Group Coordinator. Additional players are welcome to join the club and train

with the squad but will not play in matches. Where there is sufficient interest, the club will look at setting up additional teams to satisfy demand.

- When the recommended maximum squad sizes are reached, registration of new players for the Club and Leagues will cease until places become available.
- U7 children may play in the U8s team, but may be kept down the following year so they play in the correct year group from then on. Wherever possible, all children should play in their correct age group.
- For each 11 a side match, it is normally recommended that the manager should select no more than 14 players to attend, as this reduces disruption and helps ensure that children do not get cold on the sidelines. As with mini teams, this will require rotation of “rested” players if everyone is available.

### 3 Squad structure

The U7 squads are entirely flexible. The Age Group Coordinator decides in which team the children play each week. U8 squads will be selected on ability where possible. The rapid nature of development in the younger age groups means it is possible that the squads may change significantly at Christmas. Squads for older age groups may change half way through the season to make minor adjustments.

The recommended squad structure is:

- Red – A team
- Blue – B team
- Green – C team
- White – D team
- Yellow
- Purple
- Orange
- Black
- Grey
- Claret

However, this is not set in stone. Some age groups elect to operate an A team and two or three B teams. At younger age groups, matching levels of ability between squads is less of an issue than at older groups. Some age groups may use a slightly different colour grading; however, Red is always the A team.

The girls teams operate outside of the "traditional" Raiders naming convention as the girls structure does not fit into the boys Red, Blue and Green approach. We have moved to an 'Our girls are out of this World' theme....Solars, Supersonics, Galactics and the list goes on!

Boys can be transferred between squads at any time, subject to the League rules on player transfers. If the players are registered with a league, the transfer deadline is February. Girls cannot be transferred between squads within the HGFPL league at any point in the season.

Players cannot play for more than one team within the same league, unless a formal transfer has taken place. However, players can be dual registered for teams in separate leagues to provide cover for absences BUT NOT to strengthen a team for a specific match. So a player in West Herts Youth League can also be registered in the Watford Friendly Leagues to provide cover for another team. This should be made known to the Club Secretary.

Squads are structured as far as possible so that players are matched with players of similar ability. Parents can express a preference for their child to play at a lower level. So, the parent of a player of Red (A) team standard can opt for their child to play for the Blue (B) team. However, a request to move down to a lower level is at the discretion of the Age Group Coordinator, and may not take place if this causes significant disruption to the balance of the squads across the age group.

A parent cannot opt for their child to play at a higher level, if it is against the judgement of the managers and coaches.

Squad selection at the start of a season is undertaken in consultation with all age group managers, and the age group coaches. A Parent Representative is also present at the discussions.

## **4 Equal Playing Time**

The club has a philosophy of “Equal Playing Time”. “Equal Playing Time” applies over the season, not to one match. This means that we can give the weaker players extended time in the less competitive games.

“Equal Playing Time” inevitably forces a manager to make changes when they may not want to. For the younger age groups in particular, substitutions have to be thought out before the game starts. A manager should not start with the strongest team and end with the weakest as this can create bad feeling if the team loses the lead in the final minutes. It is much better to start with the weaker players and stack the defence with the better players on the pitch so that there is a rousing finale with the better players, hopefully leading to victory!

There will be occasions when “Equal Playing Time” is inappropriate and managers should abide with the spirit of this rule rather than without exception.

For a Red team where there may be a greater emphasis on playing to win, all players should receive a reasonable amount of pitch time.

## **5 New children joining during the season**

If a child wishes to join the club during the season and there are places within the age group, the Age Group Coordinator will take the decision on whether they can join one of the squads. If the squads are all full, then the child will be able to join the club for training but will not be eligible for matches. If enough extra players wish to join, the club will try to create an extra team.

When a vacancy becomes available, it will go to the most able player on the waiting list. If the player’s ability warrants inclusion in a higher team, but there is only space in a lower team, then they will join the lower team until the start of the next season.

## **6 Less able children**

All children regardless of ability will be able to join the club. However, if it is felt they are not yet ready to play matches they will be invited to train with the club and not to play matches until they have achieved an appropriate level. If a child has already played matches for a team but it is felt that they are not ready for it, the club will still do its best to accommodate them within a team. However, in exceptional circumstances, if a child is struggling to fit within the lowest ability team and it is felt to be in the best interest of the child and their team-mates not to play matches, they may be asked to attend training only and not play in matches following consultation with their parents and with the agreement of the Committee.

## **7 Training players**

Where squads are fully subscribed, the manager may be able to accept a new member as a training player. A training player pays £100 per year, completes the Raiders registration form but is not registered to play for the team in any of the local leagues. When a vacancy becomes available in the team squad, the manager then has the option to upgrade the training player to full membership, eligible to play in competitive games.

Training players MUST COMPLETE a club registration and pay the £100 fee to ensure that he/she is covered by the Club's public liability insurance.

## **8 Squad selection for girls football at Raiders**

Girls squad selection is more complex than the boys when you take into account player's football development rate, girls social needs, varying levels of ability and varying numbers of girls playing within age groups. We also operate within restricting factors of league regulations and the fact that girl's football, whilst growing, does not have the scale which boy's football has. For this reason we have a different selection policy to the boys and one which we expect to fine-tune and adapt over the course of the coming seasons.

### **8.1 U8s and U9s**

Mixed ability based on when the girls signed up, schools attended and friendship groups. At this stage it's fun for all, non-competitive and the girls are new in so they need time to find their footballing feet.

### **8.2 U10s**

As most of the girls are still relatively new to football we felt on balance it would be best for the girls not to move to any form of streaming. However we have created three evenly balanced teams, based on ability then matching friendship groups where possible to:

- Integrate the high number of training players from the 15/16 season who have joined as full members for 2016/17.
- Keep each team competitive.
- Retain some friendships from 2015/16 teams as well as mixing the girls up to keep the age group feel

Stronger players have been invited to play up a year group or Dual Register into the U11s to stretch them as the 16/17 season progresses. Should 16/17 U11s semi-streaming work successfully then we anticipate us moving to semi-streaming for this age group the following season

### **8.3 U11s**

The U11s is a strong and established age group, We feel this age group can move to semi-streaming, i.e. one team of the stronger ability players and two evenly balanced teams, based on ability then matching friendship groups where possible to:

- Create a team of players who can compete strongly in the league and stretch the girls.
- Keep each of the 3 teams competitive.
- Integrate the new and dual registered players evenly across the two balanced teams

- Retain some friendships from 15/16 teams as well as mixing the girls up to keep the age group feel

#### **8.4 U12s and U13s**

We have enough players to field one strong team in each age group. Stronger players from the U12s have been invited to occasionally play up a year group into the U13s to stretch them as the 2016/17 season progresses as well as bolster numbers in the U13s.